
PROGRAM— ADVENTURE/ CHALLENGE



Section PC

STANDARDS FOR CAMP ACCREDITATION

For the purposes of these standards, adventure/challenge activities are those requiring spotting and/or belays. This category includes challenge and ropes course activities, spelunking/caving, climbing (walls or sites), rappelling (towers or sites), initiative activities, zip lines, and similar activities. The *ACA Accreditation Standards Resource CD-ROM* should be consulted for additional information on challenge-course activities.



Should read:

APPLICABILITY

This section applies to any adventure/challenge activities offered or arranged by the camp, whether on camp property, at public sites or facilities, or on the property or facilities of another camp.

All camps, including trip/travel camps, which include any adventure/challenge activities as a part of the program, must score the Program—Adventure/Challenge section of the standards. The standards in the PC section are applicable as follows:

- Camps with adventure/challenge facilities and activities under camp staff supervision must score Standards PC-1 through PC-15. This requirement includes camps providing adventure/challenge staff and equipment for user groups.
- Camps using staffed public facilities or providers for adventure/challenge activities must score Standards PC-12 through PC-17.
- Camps that have their own adventure challenge programs *AND* use staffed public facilities for some activities must score Standards PC-1 through PC-17.
- If user groups provide their own leaders or equipment for adventure/challenge activities, these standards are not scored. However, user groups should be advised of any requirements or conditions for use (see Standard PD-5). Camps should consider the requirements of the Program—Adventure/Challenge standards when establishing guidelines for user groups.

CAMPS WITH ADVENTURE/CHALLENGE STAFF AND EQUIPMENT

Standards PC-1 through PC-11 are applicable to all camps that provide adventure/challenge activities for campers, staff, or groups. Camp staff are responsible for the activities and equipment. Standards PC-1 through PC-11 *DO NOT APPLY* to camps that *ONLY* use staffed public facilities or providers and *NEVER* provide their own adventure/challenge programs.



PC-1 ADVENTURE/CHALLENGE SUPERVISOR

Are the adventure/challenge activities offered by the camp under the overall supervision of an adult staff member who has certification or documented training or experience from a recognized organization or certifying body for the type of activities offered? YES NO

INTERPRETATION: The intent of this standard is that the staff includes at least one person who is certified/documented/experienced in all adventure/challenge activities offered by the camp. This staff member supervises the conduct of each type of adventure/challenge activity. This person should have the knowledge and experience to make sound judgments concerning participants, equipment, facilities, safety considerations, supervision and procedures for the activity. This supervisor does not necessarily need to be present at each activity, but does need to provide the training and supervision necessary for activity leaders to carry out their responsibilities in each type of adventure/challenge activity.

Documentation of training must be available for each category of adventure/challenge activity, if more than one type is offered (e.g., ropes course and caving). A “recognized organization” includes national and regional resources for specific activities such as those offered by various appropriate authoritative sources or a course from a university or training center.

The ACA website, www.acacamps.org, should be consulted for a list of authoritative sources on adventure/challenge activities.

COMPLIANCE DEMONSTRATION: Visitor observation of written documentation of certification, training, or experience for each type of adventure/challenge activity offered.

WRITTEN DOCUMENTATION IS REQUIRED

Applies to:

- Day camps
- Resident camps
- Short-term resident programs
- User-group programs

PC-2 SUPERVISOR QUALIFICATIONS

Does the camp's overall supervisor of adventure/challenge activities have at least six week's experience in a management or supervisory capacity in a similar type(s) of program(s)? YES NO

Applies to:

- Day camps
- Resident camps
- Short-term resident programs
- User-group programs

INTERPRETATION: In addition to experience managing or supervising similar programs, an individual with experience assisting a supervisor of a similar program is considered appropriate to meet the requirements of this standard.

COMPLIANCE DEMONSTRATION: Director/staff explanation of qualifications.

PC-3 STAFF SKILL VERIFICATION

Does the camp have written evidence that the skills of each staff member teaching or assisting in adventure/challenge activities are verified and evaluated by the adventure/challenge director or supervisor? YES NO

Applies to:

- Day camps
- Resident camps
- Short-term resident programs
- User-group programs

INTERPRETATION: It is the camp's responsibility to verify the skills of those staff members who are working with adventure/challenge activities, based on recommendations of authoritative sources, even for persons with certifications. Staff should be evaluated prior to leading any activities.

COMPLIANCE DEMONSTRATION: Visitor observation of written documentation of skills evaluation.

WRITTEN DOCUMENTATION IS REQUIRED

PC-4 SUPERVISION OF ACTIVITY LEADERS

Does the camp have documentation of regular observations by supervisors to verify that adventure/challenge activity leaders:

- Enforce established safety regulations,
- Provide appropriate instruction to participants,
- Identify and manage environmental and other potential hazards related to the activity, and
- Apply appropriate emergency and rescue procedures related to the activity and the participants?

YES NO

INTERPRETATION: A critical factor in a camp's level of effectiveness is its staff. In turn, one of the primary keys to staff effectiveness is appropriate training, which is then subsequently augmented by supervision, reinforcement, coaching, correcting, and instruction, as needed. The intent of this standard is that supervisors document observations of leaders conducting program activities. Such documentation may include checklists, copies of performance evaluations, and notes taken by supervisors. "Regular observations" refers to observing leaders on a schedule determined by the camp, based on specific factors, such as the complexity of the program, length of season, and background of instructors.

This standard differs from Standard HR-20 in that this requirement specifically addresses the documented observation of staff members who are leading adventure/challenge program activities with participants. Standard HR-20 deals with the general supervision of camper/staff interaction and does not require documentation.

"Supervisors" of adventure/challenge activity leaders may have different titles, such as activity specialist, head instructor, activity coordinator, etc. The supervision may also be provided by a program director or camp director who has appropriate qualifications. These individuals have the responsibility to train and oversee individual activity leaders or assistants.

"Established safety regulations" may include general camp safety regulations covered in Standard OM-8 and those regulations established for the specific activity or areas. "Appropriate instruction" refers to the fact that the instruction is tailored to the age, ability level, and special needs of participants. "Environmental hazards" may include those factors related to weather, terrain, or other natural conditions, such as animals, poisonous plants, etc.

Applies to:

- Day camps
- Resident camps
- Short-term resident programs
- User-group programs

Because supervisors may not have an opportunity to observe staff responding to actual emergencies, supervisors should verify that staff are aware of and fully able to undertake appropriate procedures concerning how to respond to emergencies. Staff should practice “rescue procedures” when adventure/challenge activities may require specific technical rescue procedures or equipment.

COMPLIANCE DEMONSTRATION: Visitor observation of documentation; visitor observation of randomly selected activities.

WRITTEN DOCUMENTATION IS REQUIRED



PC-5 OPERATING PROCEDURES

Does the camp implement written operating procedures for each type of adventure/challenge activity, based on information from authoritative sources, that include:

PC-5A: Eligibility requirements for participation and minimum ratios of trained staff to participants required for each type of activity?
YES NO

PC-5B: Identification of appropriate protective equipment and procedures for equipment maintenance and recordkeeping?
YES NO

PC-5C: Safety regulations and emergency and/or rescue procedures?
YES NO

INTERPRETATION: Camps that offer more than one type of adventure/challenge activity may either have operating procedures that are combined for similar activities, with exceptions noted for any differences, or have separate procedures for each activity. Ratios and procedures must be consistent with and based on recommendations of authoritative sources.

"Protective equipment" may include apparel (e.g., helmets, gloves, etc.), harnesses, or other safety gear. Operating procedures for equipment maintenance and recordkeeping should be consistent with recommendations from authoritative sources. Safety regulations and emergency or rescue procedures should be specific to the activities, staffing, location, and clientele.

The *ACA Accreditation Standards Resource CD-ROM* should be consulted for sample challenge-course procedures.

COMPLIANCE DEMONSTRATION: Visitor observation of written operating procedures.

WRITTEN DOCUMENTATION IS REQUIRED

Applies to:

- Day camps
- Resident camps
- Short-term resident programs
- User-group programs

PC-6 ADVENTURE/CHALLENGE EQUIPMENT

Does the camp require that equipment used in adventure/challenge activities be appropriate to the size and abilities of user, and be stored in a manner to safeguard effectiveness? YES NO

Applies to:

- Day camps
- Resident camps
- Short-term resident programs
- User-group programs

INTERPRETATION: Camp staff should follow specific guidelines from authoritative sources on sizing and storing equipment. Equipment may include apparel (e.g., helmets, gloves, etc.), harnesses, ropes, light sources for spelunking, or other gear. Storage should be available to keep equipment dry and protected from rodents. The ACA website, www.acacamps.org, should be consulted for a list of authoritative sources for adventure/challenge equipment.

COMPLIANCE DEMONSTRATION: Visitor observation of equipment storage and use; director/staff explanation of sizes available.

PC-7 EQUIPMENT MAINTENANCE

Does the camp require:

PC-7A: Safety checks of all equipment and elements prior to each use? YES NO

PC-7B: Written records of regular inspection and maintenance of all equipment and elements utilized in adventure/challenge activities? YES NO

Applies to:

- Day camps
- Resident camps
- Short-term resident programs
- User-group programs

INTERPRETATION: Camp staff should follow specific guidelines from authoritative sources on what to look for when conducting safety checks of the equipment and elements prior to each use. "Elements" refers to stations or events in ropes courses and challenge courses, and to climbing walls, rappelling towers, zip lines, Tarzan swings, etc. Safety checks should include the terrain and area surrounding the elements. Authoritative source guidelines should also be followed on the documentation required for inspections, use, maintenance, and replacement of equipment and elements. Maintenance records for equipment include such factors as hours of use and falls on climbing and belay ropes; inspection records for harnesses, carabiners, helmets, and webbing; and purchase, cleaning, and replacement dates for equipment.

The ACA website, www.acacamps.org, should be consulted for a list of authoritative sources on equipment maintenance.

COMPLIANCE DEMONSTRATION: Visitor observation of written documentation; director/staff description of procedures for safety checks.

WRITTEN DOCUMENTATION IS REQUIRED

PC-8 ACTIVITY SUPERVISION

Does the camp have a policy in practice that any use of adventure/challenge program activity areas or equipment must be actively supervised by a qualified adult activity leader? YES NO

INTERPRETATION: Access to adventure/challenge equipment and areas should be limited to qualified activity leaders. This requirement applies to both camper and staff use of equipment and areas. "Actively supervised" means that a qualified adult is present and monitoring the activity. "Qualified" refers to the fact that, at a minimum, the activity leader meets the requirements of Standards PC-3 and PC-4. Levels of qualification may vary due to the age of participants and content of the activity. Procedures to limit access may include such factors as scheduling, posted regulations, physical barriers, or locked areas and equipment, as appropriate.

COMPLIANCE DEMONSTRATION: Director/staff and camper explanation of staff coverage and access control; visitor observation of activities.

Applies to:

- Day camps
- Resident camps
- Short-term resident programs
- User-group programs

PC-9 SPOTTERS AND BELAYERS

Does the camp require that spotters and belayers be:

PC-9A: Instructed in proper procedures and directly supervised until competency is demonstrated? YES NO

PC-9B: Located in positions from which they can continuously observe (spot) and quickly assist any participant? YES NO

INTERPRETATION: All adventure/challenge activities (as initially defined in this section) require some level of spotting or belaying. The level of instruction and competency required will vary, depending on the type of activity, the area, and the abilities of participants.

COMPLIANCE DEMONSTRATION: Visitor observation of activities; director/staff description of procedures.

Applies to:

- Day camps
- Resident camps
- Short-term resident programs
- User-group programs

CONSTRUCTED ADVENTURE/CHALLENGE AREAS

If the camp does not have a ropes course, challenge course, climbing wall, rappelling tower, zip line, or other such constructed adventure/challenge area, Standards PC-10 and PC-11 *DO NOT APPLY*.



PC-10 ACCESS CONTROL

Does the camp control access to activity areas, such as ropes courses, rappelling towers, zip lines, etc.? YES NO

INTERPRETATION: The intent of this standard is to prevent the use of those areas that may involve an undue risk of injury to participants by unauthorized or unsupervised persons, as well as to avoid potentially hazardous situations when the area is in use. Procedures for controlling access to such activity areas may include such steps as education, posted regulations, scheduling, dismantling equipment, and/or physical barriers.

COMPLIANCE DEMONSTRATION: Visitor observation of activity areas; director/staff description of access control measures.

Applies to:

- Day camps
- Resident camps
- Short-term resident programs
- User-group programs

PC-11 ANNUAL INSPECTION

Does the camp have written evidence of an annual inspection by qualified personnel of adventure/challenge course elements to ensure the integrity of all hardware, materials, and equipment? YES NO

INTERPRETATION: "Qualified personnel" should have experience in the construction and evaluation of adventure/challenge courses, follow the recommendations of authoritative sources, and adhere to peer-accepted practices in their construction and inspection.

The ACA website, www.acacamps.org, should be consulted for a list of authoritative sources on adventure/challenge courses.

COMPLIANCE DEMONSTRATION: Visitor observation of written inspection report; director description of qualifications of person.

Applies to:

- Day camps
- Resident camps
- Short-term resident programs
- User-group programs

WRITTEN DOCUMENTATION IS REQUIRED

ALL ADVENTURE/CHALLENGE ACTIVITIES IN AND OUT OF CAMP

The standards in this subsection of the Program—Adventure/Challenge section apply to all adventure/challenge activities, including those provided or staffed by the camp *AND* those conducted at staffed public facilities. All camps that offer adventure/challenge activities score Standards PC-12 through PC-17.



PC-12 FIRST AIDER

Does the camp require a staff member to be on duty at adventure/challenge activities who has current certification from a nationally recognized provider of training in first aid, including training on bloodborne pathogens?

YES NO

INTERPRETATION: “On duty” means readily available to render needed assistance. For adventure/challenge activities in camp, the first aider could be on duty in a centrally accessible area. Camps using public facilities may either bring their own certified personnel or have a written policy that mandates that only facilities with appropriately certified personnel are used. Nonmedical religious camps meet this requirement by providing a person who has the qualifications specified in writing by the religious program to handle emergency situations.

COMPLIANCE DEMONSTRATION: Visitor observation of certification card(s); director/staff explanation procedure to provide coverage; and/or written policy for use of staffed public facilities.

WRITTEN DOCUMENTATION IS REQUIRED

Applies to:

- Day camps
- Resident camps
- Short-term resident programs
- User-group programs



PC-13 SAFETY ORIENTATION

Does the camp require that the staff provide participants with a safety orientation, based on written procedures, before engaging in adventure/challenge activities?
YES NO

Applies to:

- Day camps
- Resident camps
- Short-term resident programs
- User-group programs

INTERPRETATION: The safety orientation should include safety rules and regulations, proper use of protective equipment, safety signals and practices to be used as appropriate, and necessary information on the characteristics and boundaries of the area. When using staffed public facilities or providers, the camp may supplement the safety orientation of the facility with specific safety regulations for campers. The safety orientation should be consistent with the operating procedures for adventure/challenge activities (see Standard PC-5), and all rules should be covered in every orientation. "Written procedures" may be posted signs, a checklist, or a bulleted list of items addressed by staff in an oral orientation.

COMPLIANCE DEMONSTRATION: Staff/camper description of orientation procedures; visitor observation of written checklist of safety procedures.

WRITTEN DOCUMENTATION IS REQUIRED

PC-14 COMPETENCY DEMONSTRATION

Does the camp require that participants using adventure/challenge equipment or facilities be strictly monitored until competency is demonstrated?
YES NO

Applies to:

- Day camps
- Resident camps
- Short-term resident programs
- User-group programs

INTERPRETATION: Due to the possible dangers involved in the misuse of equipment or facilities, staff should monitor campers carefully as they are learning. Staff members (from the camp or from the public facility) should provide coaching, practice, and modeling as the campers strive for competency. Staff should maintain contact with participants to confirm that knots, harnesses, anchors, and other equipment are being used properly. Teaching skills progressively is a critical factor in conducting challenge activities safely and in acquiring new skills.

COMPLIANCE DEMONSTRATION: Director/staff description of procedures.

PC-15 PROTECTIVE HEADGEAR

MANDATORY (ALL)

Does the camp implement a policy that requires the use of protective headgear by all participants when rock climbing, rappelling, spelunking, and when using high—ropes course elements or a vertical climbing wall/tower? YES NO

INTERPRETATION: The above listed standard requires that protective headgear will be used by active participants in any above listed activities because a head injury could result from the impact of a falling rock or loose object, or hitting the head when climbing, falling or swinging. The type of headgear must be appropriate to the situation.

An active participant is defined as:

- in spelunking, anyone participating in the activity.
- in any kind of climbing or high ropes activity (including a zip line), the person on belay.

This standard applies to both indoor and outdoor climbing experiences that use a belay system. A zip line is considered a "high ropes" activity even if there are no other elements. See the Glossary for further definition of high ropes, low ropes and initiatives.

Aqua zips (zip lines that end in water) are an exception to this standard. Experts have determined that protective headgear should not be worn if zip line participants end up in the water. However, helmets should be worn if the participant is belayed to the aqua zip platform, then the helmet removed once the participant has reached the launch platform for the aqua zip line. If access to the aqua zip does not require a belay, then a helmet is not needed.

Camps are encouraged to define in their policy any other situations where they want other participants to wear helmets (i.e. belayers, persons in the "drop zone", persons waiting on real rock walls, etc.) either for safety or to model good practice.

COMPLIANCE DEMONSTRATION: Visitor observation of activities; director/staff explanation of policy's implementation.

Does not apply if climbing, rappelling, spelunking, and high-ropes or vertical-climbing wall/tower activities are never provided.

Does not apply to aqua zips if no belay system is needed.

Applies to:

- Day camps
- Resident camps
- Short-term resident programs
- User-group programs

PC-16 PUBLIC PROVIDERS OF ADVENTURE/CHALLENGE

Does the camp implement a policy to select only staffed public provider(s) of adventure/challenge activities that:

PC-16A: Provide an adequate number of instructors and leaders whose qualifications have been verified by the provider? YES NO

PC-16B: Utilize equipment that is appropriate in size and type and is in good repair? YES NO

PC-16C: Utilize facilities and areas that meet nationally recognized guidelines for construction and maintenance? YES NO

Does not apply if the camp never uses staffed public facilities or providers for adventure/challenge activities.

PC-16C does not apply if constructed elements or areas are never used.

Applies to:

- Day camps
- Resident camps
- Short-term resident programs
- User-group programs

INTERPRETATION: Information about the facility's instructor qualifications, facilities, equipment, and operating procedures may be found either in promotional materials for the public providers of adventure/challenge activities or in the leasing/use agreement between the provider and the camp, or may be verified by personal observation and inquiry by a camp representative. Qualifications, ratios, and procedures must be consistent with those recommended by authoritative sources. The ACA website, www.acacamps.org, should be consulted for a list of authoritative sources for information on public providers of adventure/challenge activities.

COMPLIANCE DEMONSTRATION: Director description of policy and procedures used in selection.



PC-17 CAMPER SUPERVISION WITH OFF-SITE OR PUBLIC PROVIDERS

Does the camp provide staff to accompany campers to adventure/challenge activity facilities off-site or to work with trained public providers, based on written procedures that specify supervisory roles and responsibilities of the camp staff? YES NO

INTERPRETATION: When campers are at adventure/challenge facilities off-site or with public providers who bring instructors and equipment to the camp, staff must know their supervisory responsibilities. Written procedures need to clarify responsibilities for such factors as location of staff, camper behavior management, communication, and health-related matters. Responsibilities of staff will vary, depending on the location, type of activity, clientele, and staff provided by the facility or contracted service.

COMPLIANCE DEMONSTRATION: Visitor observation of written camp procedures; director/staff explanation of training and supervision practices.

WRITTEN DOCUMENTATION IS REQUIRED

Does not apply if the camp never uses off-site facilities or public providers for adventure/challenge activities.

Applies to:

- Day camps
- Resident camps
- Short-term resident programs
- User-group programs


